

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 6, 2021

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack  
Secretary, United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write to request that United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) quickly review Oregon's rules and regulations for a state meat inspection program that meets USDA standards, and, if approved, to expedite the needed training for Oregon staff, including inspectors and veterinarians, to carry out the required work. We have greatly appreciated the support USDA has given to help the Oregon Department of Agriculture develop a new state meat inspection program and for its part in protecting food safety and security, and ensuring that high quality foods are available to families and communities.

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted a significant infrastructure problem in the United States. As large meat packing facilities were crippled by the pandemic and unable to process livestock, farmers and ranchers were put at risk of losing their businesses, and families were unable to access affordable food. The Oregon meat inspection plan would reduce risks of future supply chain disruptions and allow flexibility and consistency in food processing networks. This program has strong support from agricultural producers across the state who have limited options for processing facilities resulting in small businesses signing contracts months in advance to keep their place in line. Issues are compounded by large meat processors that lack transparency in pricing and contracts. The USDA's approval of Oregon's rules and regulations would help stabilize food supply and security for our state, flatten the economic roller coaster for small agricultural businesses and establish new markets for Oregon meat.

Oregon producers and meat processors take pride in feeding their communities and the world with safe, high-quality products. They stand ready to implement a program that will create more opportunity for local and regional processors by increasing food donations to local schools and the Oregon Food Bank, and allowing quality local meats to be sold in community grocery stores and restaurants.

We stand ready to work with you on this important issue and look forward to your timely reply.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator